

JUDD, ANDREW DAVID, D.M.A. Joseph Milford Nicholson (b. 1935): Pioneer Trombone Historian. (2007)  
Directed by Dr. Randy B. Kohlenberg. 77 pp.

Interest in the history and development of the trombone and its literature escalated during the last half of the twentieth century. As curricula for doctoral degrees began to develop during the 1950s, trombonists in advanced degree programs began to recognize lapses in the history of the instrument. One of the earliest doctoral documents that focused upon creating a more comprehensive single source of trombone heritage was entitled, “A Historical Background of the Trombone and Its Music” (1967), by Joseph Milford Nicholson (b. 1935).

Joseph Nicholson was born in Penoke, Kansas, on August 15, 1935. Raised in a musical family, he learned to play the trombone in the public school bands of his hometown, Fruita, Colorado. Later, Nicholson enrolled at Southwestern Bible Institute (1952-1955) and graduated from Texas Wesleyan College (B.Mus 1957). He earned the MME (1961) from North Texas State University and the D.M.A. (1967) from the Conservatory of Music at the University of Missouri at Kansas City (UMKC). Nicholson taught at Southwestern beginning in 1956, but left in 1960 to teach at Evangel College, Springfield, MO, where he taught until 1991. During his years at Evangel, Nicholson was chair of the Fine Arts Department (1967-1981), the principal trombonist in the Springfield (MO) Symphony (1966-1977), and an active member of the Springfield Brass Quintet (1966-1977).

Nicholson pursued his interest in trombone history and literature while studying at UMKC. Because his text summarized into one document the current knowledge of the

time about the history and literature of the trombone, Nicholson's work was one of the earliest to appear outside the context of the music dictionaries. Through his writing, teaching, and presentations, Nicholson is thought to have spurred interest among the next generation of trombonists who began to develop a more comprehensive chronicle of the trombone. Nicholson's legacy continues through his influence upon trombonists and the citations in later, more era-specific histories of the instrument.



JOSEPH MILFORD NICHOLSON (b. 1935):  
PIONEER TROMBONE HISTORIAN

by

Andrew David Judd

A Dissertation Submitted to  
the Faculty of The Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Musical Arts

Greensboro  
2007

Approved by

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Committee Chair

## APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of  
The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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Dr. Joseph Nicholson's involvement in this study was invaluable. He was generous with his time and gracious in providing photographs, documents, in-depth interviews, and other assistance. Ms. Betty Chase, Evangel University Archivist, provided excellent resources for the study. Also appreciation is expressed to the colleagues and former students of Nicholson who participated in the study.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES.....	v
 CHAPTER	
I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH IN THE AREA OF TROMBONE HISTORY AND LITERATURE .....	1
Early Documents and Research (before 1950) .....	2
Studies After 1950 and The Doctor of Musical Arts Degree .....	4
II. NICHOLSON’S YOUTH AND EDUCATION.....	7
Youth and Early Years .....	7
Southwestern Bible Institute.....	13
Texas Wesleyan College .....	17
Full-Time Teaching at Southwestern and the Masters Degree .....	21
III. NICHOLSON’S AFFILIATION WITH EVANGEL COLLEGE AND THE SPRINGFIELD (MO) SYMPHONY .....	25
The Early Years .....	25
The Springfield (MO) Symphony and Brass Quintet .....	32
Nicholson’s Private Studio .....	35
Later Years and Retirement .....	44
IV. THE DOCTORAL DEGREE, TROMBONE RESEARCH, WRITINGS, AND PRESENTATIONS .....	50
The Doctoral Degree .....	50
A Historical Background of the Trombone and Its Music .....	56
Articles and Presentations About the Trombone .....	60
V. THE HISTORY OF THE TROMBONE: NICHOLSON’S IMPACT .....	66
Implications of Nicholson’s Doctoral Dissertation Document.....	70
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	73

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. The Nicholson Family in June of 1937 .....	8
Figure 2. Grade school photo of Nicholson.....	10
Figure 3. Evaluation Record Sheet from Nicholson’s duet, “Elena Polka” .....	12
Figure 4. Nicholson holding his new King 2B Trombone .....	13
Figure 5. Southwestern Select Orchestra.....	14
Figure 6. Nicholson’s Senior Photo .....	15
Figure 7. Joseph and Jo Ellen Nicholson cutting the cake at their wedding reception ...	18
Figure 8. Nicholson’s senior recital program .....	20
Figure 9. Nicholson teaching a trombone lesson at Evangel.....	27
Figure 10. Nicholson teaching a horn lesson at Evangel.....	28
Figure 11. President Carl M. Neumeyer (r.) of NASM presented Evangel’s certificate of membership in the Association to Nicholson .....	31
Figure 12. The Springfield Brass Quintet publicity photo .....	34
Figure 13. Nicholson and a quartet of students playing Christmas music at Nicholson’s house .....	37
Figure 14. Nicholson and Kolstad shown together on the stage of the old Fine Arts Auditorium at Evangel College after Kolstad’s senior recital .....	42
Figure 15. Publicity photo of Nicholson holding his Conn 88H .....	43
Figure 16. Nicholson, standing next to a French publicity sign, during the Evangel College Concert Band European Tour .....	45
Figure 17. Evangel Brass Quintet .....	46

Figure 18. Evangel Brass Quintet on the old Fine Arts Auditorium stage.....	47
Figure 19. Evangel Brass Quintet performing at the Springfield Shopping Mall .....	48
Figure 20. Nicholson receiving his Professor Emeritus commemorative plaque from Evangel President Robert H. Spence .....	49
Figure 21. Nicholson’s DMA diploma from UMKC .....	53
Figure 22. 1990 ITF at Western Michigan University .....	62

## CHAPTER I

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH IN THE AREA OF TROMBONE HISTORY AND LITERATURE

Interest in the history and development of the trombone, and the associated literature, has escalated during the last half of the twentieth century. As the trombone became a recognized instrument for study in conservatories during the late nineteenth century, performers in the United States and other countries began to seek expert instruction. Along with the interest in the trombone by students, a demand grew for instruction in traditionally liberal arts institutions of higher education. Thus, members of the faculty and administration at these institutions began to develop curricula for doctoral degrees during the 1950s in order to educate performers who ultimately would teach students in those institutions. Prior to this time, most information about the history and literature of the trombone was little more than mentioned in documents created by non-trombonists, and candidates in the aforementioned advanced degree programs are thought to have observed lapses in the written history of the instrument. Thus, many trombonists focused upon building and augmenting the history of the trombone and its literature through their research and publication in advanced degree programs.

The doctoral degree in performance, frequently titled the doctor of musical arts (D.M.A.) or some variation, began to be awarded at some point during the middle of the twentieth century. The D.M.A. typically had a requirement of a set number of solo performances accompanied by a lecture-recital or scholarly document. As candidates

matriculated through the doctoral programs, scholarly projects with substantial merit in the musical area and of interest to the individual were pursued. In the area of trombone history and literature, one of the earliest D.M.A. dissertations was completed in 1967 by Joseph Nicholson (b. 1935), and was entitled, “A Historical Background of the Trombone and its Music.”<sup>1</sup> His interest in trombone, first initiated in his undergraduate study, was ignited in graduate school. Nicholson’s initial research and the dissemination of his doctoral document are considered to have influenced many who continued to research and explore the history and literature of the trombone. Through his written documents, presentations, and trombone instruction, Nicholson influenced others to peruse their interest in trombone history, and his document served as a springboard for other published works.

#### Early Documents and Research (before 1950)

As has been the case with many other orchestral instruments, the earliest resources for research about the trombone are located in early treatises and historical documents. Information about the trombone, current at the time of publication, was contained in important works including: Martin Agricola’s *Musica Instrumentalis Deudsch* (1528),<sup>2</sup> Michael Praetorius’s *Syntagma Musicum* (1619),<sup>3</sup> Marin Mersenne’s

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<sup>1</sup> Randy Kohlenberg, “Update on Trombone Related Research, Part II,” *International Trombone Association Journal* 18, no. 4 (Winter 1990), p. 18. According to Kohlenberg’s findings, Nicholson’s dissertation was one of the first to deal with trombone history and literature in a broad and comprehensive manner.

<sup>2</sup> Agricola, Wittenberg, Facsimile, Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1896.

<sup>3</sup> Praetorius, E. Holwein, Wolfenbüttel, 1619.



*Harmonie Universelle* (1636),<sup>4</sup> Daniel Speer's *Grundrichtiger Unterricht der Musikalischen Kunst* (1687),<sup>5</sup> Hector Berlioz's *Traité de l'instrumentation* (1844),<sup>6</sup> and others. Although these works spanned the period of several hundred years, written histories and information about the literature in prominent and widely distributed venues had not been identified until the appearance of Francis W. Galpin's often cited article, "The Sackbut, Its Evolution and History" (1906),<sup>7</sup> and others printed in the *Galpin Society Journal*.

Early music dictionaries such as the *Harvard Dictionary of Music* and the *Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* began to include articles about the history of the trombone around the beginning of the twentieth century. These articles tended to be brief and did not include extensive or complete information. Typically the articles focused upon nomenclature, instrument identification and explanation of the components, method of sound production, known history about the trombone, and some references to literature. An examination of an early version of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* from 1911 revealed an article entitled, "The Sackbut."<sup>8</sup> For an unknown reason, later editions did not include an article about the sackbut. Thus, information about the history of the trombone and its literature appeared sporadically in sources that, during the first half of

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<sup>4</sup> Mersenne, Paris, 1636.

<sup>5</sup> Speer, Ulm, 1687, 1697.

<sup>6</sup> Berlioz, Paris, 1844.

<sup>7</sup> Galpin, *Proceedings of the Royal Music Association*, 1906.

<sup>8</sup> Kathleen Schlesinger, "The Sackbut," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. Vol. XXIII, Cambridge, England: University Press, 1911.

the twentieth century, were available only in works beyond the reach of most students learning to play the instrument and the general public.

#### Studies After 1950 and The Doctor of Musical Arts Degree

An early pioneer in the written history of brass instruments was Mary Rasmussen who was responsible for the publication of the *Brass Quarterly*. In this serial publication, scholarly articles about brass instruments appeared that have been, and continue to be, cited in articles and publications. Authored by some of the most renowned brass music historians of the day, the articles about the trombone tended to focus upon a specific and focused topic each of which contributed substantially to the body of knowledge. The focus, therefore, of the *Brass Quarterly* was to provide not only a comprehensive history of brass instruments, but also rather well researched and highly specific articles.

Rasmussen's interest in the trombone and the enthusiasm she generated through the publication to those who were not only music historians, but also students in trombone performance, is far reaching. Many of the articles, such as Robert Gray's "The Trombone in Contemporary Chamber Music" (1957), Rasmussen's "Two Early Nineteenth-Century Trombone Virtuosi: Carl Traugott Queisser and Friedrich August Belcke" (1961), and T. Donley Thomas's "Michael Haydn's 'Trombone' Symphony" (1962), are considered to be monuments in any study of brass history, and in the twenty-first century, continue to be as relevant as the original publication date.

In the area of trombone performance, one of the very first doctoral degrees was awarded at The Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester (NY) in 1957, to

Robert Gray.<sup>9</sup> Gray's dissertation was one of the very first to focus completely upon a trombone related topic, although not a history of the instrument.<sup>10</sup> Gray's writing has continued to contribute to modern trombone performance, and his work was an authoritative guide for the trombone in chamber ensemble music.

As stated, the published materials that focused upon historical aspects of the trombone and its history, prior to Nicholson's work, included articles in various sources, but generally were not available to students of the instrument or the general public. One substantial work, Philip Bate's *The Trumpet and Trombone*, does predate Nicholson's.<sup>11</sup> This text did provide a fairly detailed account of the uses of the trombone throughout its history.<sup>12</sup> Robin Gregory's text, *The Trombone*, was published in 1973, six years after Nicholson's.<sup>13</sup> Gregory was a trombonist, and the text was an expansion of Bate's earlier work, along with an extensive section detailing the music for trombone.<sup>14</sup>

Gregory's and Bate's works were two of the most widely available published texts in the 1960s and 1970s. Nicholson's work, however, continued to be the most comprehensive overview of trombone history in a single source, although not as widely available. After trombonists teaching in higher education and their graduate students

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<sup>9</sup> Randy Kohlenberg, "Update on Trombone Related Research, Part I," *International Trombone Association Journal* 18, no. 3 (Fall 1989), p. 25.

<sup>10</sup> Robert E. Gray, "The Treatment of Trombone in Contemporary Chamber Literature." D.M.A. diss., Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, 1957.

<sup>11</sup> Bate, New York: Norton, 1966.

<sup>12</sup> See Ch. 7: The Slide Trombone: Medieval to Modern, pg. 138-151.

<sup>13</sup> Gregory, London: Faber and Faber, 1973.

<sup>14</sup> See Part II: The Music, pg. 151-312.

learned about Nicholson's work, photocopied versions of Nicholson's document were passed from one person to another.<sup>15</sup> Considered in the 1970s to be a starting point in the study of trombone history and literature, Nicholson's work is thought to have substantially influenced many who later studied and authored their own texts in this area.

According to Randy Kohlenberg:

In the first year of study in my doctoral program, I was assigned the task of authoring my own history of the trombone, in an independent study. I consulted the available works, but after discussing my task with other graduate students, I was handed a copy of Nicholson's work. I used it as my resource to write as complete a research paper as possible.<sup>16</sup>

Kohlenberg was one of many graduate students who found Nicholson's document useful as demonstrated by numerous bibliographic references.<sup>17</sup> Nicholson's work as a trombone pedagogue and historian is the focus of the remainder of this document. Chapter II provides a biographical sketch of Nicholson, his education, and his early career, and serves as a background for the remainder of this document.

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<sup>15</sup> Randy Kohlenberg, interview, March 5, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> A search of trombone-related dissertations from the 1970s and 1980s returned a large number of bibliographic and text references to Nicholson's document, See Bibliography: Dissertations.

## CHAPTER II

### NICHOLSON'S YOUTH AND EDUCATION

Joseph Milford Nicholson II was born on August 15, 1935, in Penoke, Kansas. Nicholson was the seventh child of eight born to Joseph Marion (1900-1988) and Rita Irene Nicholson (1900-1959). The family lived in the area of Kansas known as the *dust bowl* because of the drought, storms, and insect plagues of the time. Nicholson's father realized he needed to relocate somewhere other than Kansas to earn a living, because the Great Depression had created many economic pressures for him. Thus, in 1937, the family packed their belongings onto a flatbed truck and journeyed west to Colorado. When the Nicholsons arrived in the Grand Junction area of western Colorado, Nicholson's mother thought she was in heaven because of the bountiful orchards, fields of grain, and fat livestock.<sup>18</sup> After traveling 10 miles west of Grand Junction to Fruita, CO, the elder Nicholson found what he called a "ten-acre ranch" for sale at a cost of \$1200 and arranged to pay for it by the end of the summer.<sup>19</sup> Nicholson lived in Fruita, CO, for 15 years. The Nicholson family from 1937 is shown in Figure 1.

#### Youth and Early Years

Surrounded by music in his home, Nicholson's mother was the main music teacher for the family. She played the piano and sang at their local church.

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<sup>18</sup> Joseph Nicholson, E-mail correspondence, May 20, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.



Figure 1. The Nicholson Family in June of 1937, *back row left to right*, Marjorie, Clara, Virgil, Joseph Sr., and Rita, *front row left to right*, Joan, Joseph Jr., Erma, and Everette.

Nicholson's grandmother, who also played the piano, was known for performing recitations at the local opera houses during the late 1800s and the early 1900s.<sup>20</sup>

Nicholson's siblings were musical, and as he recalled, "At a very young age we were playing harmonicas, guitars and stringed instruments as a family. Family gatherings always featured music."<sup>21</sup> Although his father enjoyed music and sang at church, Nicholson did not consider his father to be musical and recalled his father stating, "I must have a lot of music in me, because none ever came out."<sup>22</sup> Overall, the Nicholson family enjoyed making music together.

The church played a significant role in Nicholson's early musical experiences. His family attended the Fruita Assembly of God Church, and as he recalled, "I rarely missed a service and sometimes attended revival meetings that lasted weeks."<sup>23</sup> Nicholson remembered "playing regularly in a church combo with piano, drums, clarinet, accordion, guitar, trumpet, and my trombone."<sup>24</sup> His faith was strongly tied to music and playing the trombone. Throughout his life, Nicholson performed in church and lead worship music for services.

Nicholson began to play the trombone in the fifth grade. He did not choose the trombone as much as the trombone chose him. Nicholson's mother frequently volunteered to clean their church, and as he recalled, "Over time she noticed a trombone

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<sup>20</sup> Joseph Nicholson, interview, December 18, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Nicholson, interview, January 16, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Joseph Nicholson, *Thank You, Jesus!*, December 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

that had been left behind by a young man who had graduated from high school and left the city. She claimed that trombone for me and paid \$10 to the family. Thus it was that at age 10, I took up the trombone in school.”<sup>25</sup> Figure 2 is a photo of Nicholson from grade school.



Figure 2. Grade school photo of Nicholson (ca. 1946).

Nicholson was a well-rounded musician, and he recalled a middle school musical in which he sang the leading role. In the musical, a western, he sang all fourteen verses of “Little Joe the Wrangler.” Nicholson remembered that his parents bought him a new straw hat especially for the performance. He also recalled that his music teacher was very impressed because he did not forget any of the words to all fourteen verses.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Nicholson, interview, December 18, 2006.



Nicholson credited his early development as a musician to the public school music program in Fruita where he played both the trombone and baritone in the high school band. Although Nicholson was not always the top player in the trombone section, he recalled his desire to compete for the top chair.<sup>27</sup> Nicholson competed in the District Solo and Ensemble Contest while at Fruita High School, and in Figure 3, the 1950 Evaluation Record Sheet of the duet in which he performed, “Elena Polka”, is reproduced.

Nicholson’s first private teacher was the Fruita Union High School band director, and Nicholson recalled, “He was a very good teacher because he straightened me out on the fundamentals of music.”<sup>28</sup> The high school band director was not a trombonist, however, and did not offer Nicholson any technique or specialized instruction on the trombone. Nicholson recalled that he did not start to practice consistently until his lessons in high school commenced.<sup>29</sup>

Nicholson received a new trombone while he was in high school. His mother saved rent money that she collected from renting a room of their house, which she used to purchase the trombone for Nicholson. Nicholson’s new trombone was a King 2B as shown in Figure 4, which he played for the next 15 years.

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<sup>27</sup> Nicholson, phone interview, January 16, 2007.

<sup>28</sup> Nicholson, interview, December 18, 2006.

<sup>29</sup> Nicholson, phone interview, January 16, 2007.

Joe Nicholson \_\_\_\_\_ "Elena Polka"  
 Jack McKissen \_\_\_\_\_ Trombone Duet

# E V A L U A T I O N   R E C O R D   S H E E T

TONE. . . . . I

General Comments

Beauty -  
 Volume ✓  
 Control  
 Intonation ✓

Good intonation. Be sure that both of you sustain your notes so that your longer notes have the same value. I appreciated your rsing the retards in the second page. If you boys would practice long tonrs you will find that you won't lose the air that you are now losing when attacking notes. Nice team work, boys. A little more attention to the dynamics in the piece would make it more interesting. Play your double fortes at the end of the piece a little louder to give in a better ending.

INTERPRETATION. . . . . II

Tempo ✓  
 Expression -  
 Phrasing ✓  
 Balance ✓  
 Style ✓

TECHNIC. . . . . II

Fine Work.

Tongueing -  
 Fingering  
 Smoothness ✓  
 Breathing ✓  
 Bowing  
 Use of Pedal  
 Rudiments  
 Accuracy ✓  
 Articulation ✓

EMBOUGHURE. . . . . I

Outstanding strong Points:

RMYTHM. . . . . I

Good Teamwork

MUSICIANSHIP. . . . . II

Outstanding weak points:

Tongueing

Superior X  
 Excellent  
 Good ✓  
 Fair  
 Incomplete

Figure 3. Evaluation Record Sheet from Nicholson's duet, "Elena Polka" (ca. 1950).



Figure 4. Nicholson holding his new King 2B Trombone (ca. 1950).

#### Southwestern Bible Institute

Nicholson left Fruita in the summer of 1952 to attend Southwestern Bible Institute (later renamed Southwestern Assemblies of God University) in Waxahachie, TX. A senior in high school when he started at Southwestern, Nicholson attended Southwestern because his oldest brother Virgil was a faculty member and the school was affiliated with the Assemblies of God denomination. He lived with his brother Virgil while he attended Southwestern and benefited from the fact that Southwestern had a high school, a junior college, and a four-year bible college on its campus. Because Southwestern included a combination of schooling levels, Nicholson was able to earn college credit during his senior year of high school.

During the 1952-1953 school year, Nicholson was offered the opportunity to play with the Select Orchestra at Southwestern, and Figure 5 is a publicity photo for the Select



Orchestra from 1952. The Select Orchestra was open to all students from the different levels of schooling at Southwestern as long as their schedule permitted. The Select Orchestra toured frequently throughout the United States and allowed Nicholson to see many parts of the country.



Figure 5. Southwestern Select Orchestra (1952). Nicholson is third from the left on the back row.

During his senior year at Southwestern, Nicholson studied with C. N. Rice (n.d.), a trumpet player who introduced him to Arthur Pryor's *Starlight* and Gardell Simons'

*Atlantic Zephyrs*.<sup>30</sup> Overall, Rice was able to teach Nicholson to play music, but like Nicholson's band director from Fruita, he could not offer specialized instruction on the trombone.<sup>31</sup> Figure 6 is one of Nicholson's high school senior photos from 1952.



Figure 6. Nicholson's Senior Photo (1952).

Nicholson studied music and completed his general education courses during his first two years of college at Southwestern (1953-1955). During his first year of college, Jesse Peterson (b. 1932), a euphonium player, was hired to become the new brass teacher and band director at Southwestern. Peterson had experience playing the trombone and

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<sup>30</sup> The C. in C.N. is short for Charles, but as evidenced by Figure 4, he was never referred to by his full name.

<sup>31</sup> Nicholson, interview, December 18, 2006.

introduced Nicholson to standard study literature that included the *Arban Complete Method for Trombone and Euphonium* and V. Cornette's *Method for Trombone*.<sup>32</sup>

Nicholson's choice to pursue music was a natural decision. His parents consistently encouraged his musical studies because music was important to their Christian faith.<sup>33</sup> Nicholson never really questioned his decision to study music, but instead, decided to pursue this career because it was an area he enjoyed. He recalled,

It was never a calculated or scientific decision for me to study music. I was a trombone player and was having a measure of success with that. Choosing music seemed the natural thing for me to do. I never considered how much money I would make, or what the job opportunities would be, or how far it would take me in fame and recognition. Music was something I was reasonably good at and it was the path I fell into.<sup>34</sup>

Because of both the challenges and the enjoyment it brought to Nicholson, he built his lifetime study and career upon music.

During the spring semester of 1954, Nicholson began to date Jo Ellen Cramer, a Southwestern student. The two met at a "Tacky Party", a party where the idea was to be completely out of fashion. While at the "Tacky Party," Jo Ellen was introduced to Nicholson and asked in jest, "Why don't you ask me out sometime?"<sup>35</sup> A week later, Jo Ellen teasingly told Nicholson that she "had waited all Friday for him and that he never

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Nicholson, interview, January 16, 2007.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Jo Ellen Nicholson, interview, January 16, 2007.

came.”<sup>36</sup> Nicholson responded by asking her for a date. They dated a year and a half before they were married on August 19, 1955. Figure 7 shows the Nicholsons cutting the cake at their wedding reception.

### Texas Wesleyan College

After marriage, the Nicholsons’ first city of residence was Fort Worth, TX, where Nicholson began his studies at Texas Wesleyan College (later renamed Texas Wesleyan University). Nicholson already had completed two years of college study, but Southwestern did not offer a degree in music education. To earn a music degree, Nicholson needed to complete his college study at an institution other than Southwestern. Nicholson chose Texas Wesleyan because Peterson, a Texas Wesleyan graduate, helped him to obtain a scholarship for music study and because other Southwestern students also had studied there successfully.

As a newly wed husband, Nicholson pursued a rigorous schedule to provide for his family. During his first year of marriage, he worked at the Arlington, TX, Buick-Oldsmobile-Pontiac (BOP) General Motors car manufacturing plant. Nicholson worked during the evening shift at the BOP plant and took classes during the day. Amazingly, he earned enough income to allow his wife to earn her degree in nursing. Nicholson recalled, that during the first year of marriage, he slept only four hours per night for months at a time.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Nicholson, interview, January 16, 2007.



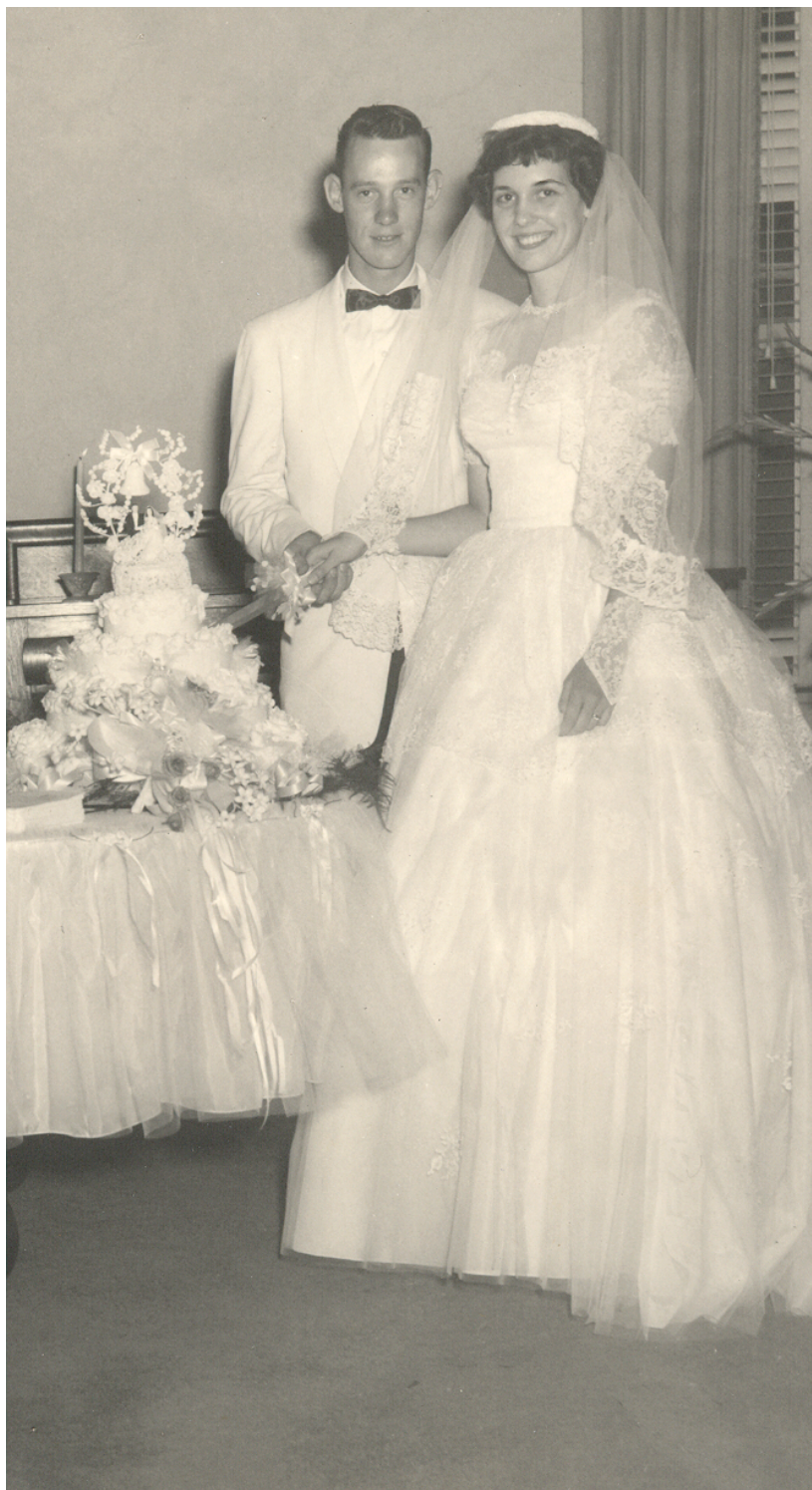


Figure 7. Joseph and Jo Ellen Nicholson cutting the cake at their wedding reception (August 19, 1955).



Nicholson studied trombone with Tom Skinner (n.d.) during his first year (1955-1956) at Texas Wesleyan College. Skinner, a freelance trombonist in local rodeo bands, encouraged Nicholson to play the standard study literature such as the *Arban Complete Method for Trombone and Euphonium*. During his senior year at Texas Wesleyan, 1956-1957, Nicholson studied with a different trombone teacher, A. Wesley Tower (n.d.). Tower was a trumpet player who conducted the orchestra and taught all the brass students. Nicholson recalled that Tower, who had recently returned from studying in France, was highly motivated by his experiences to teach and inspire the students at Texas Wesleyan.<sup>38</sup> Tower was a knowledgeable and helpful teacher for Nicholson, and helped him choose the literature for his senior recital because, at the time, Nicholson had done very little study of the solo literature. Nicholson later was honored by receiving an invitation to perform Faure's *Après un Reve*, one of the works played on his recital (Figure 8), at the commencement ceremony at Texas Wesleyan College.

During his senior year at Texas Wesleyan, Nicholson was offered the opportunity to teach part-time at Southwestern as the band director and brass instrument teacher. The student teaching requirement for Nicholson's music education degree was waived due to his teaching load at Southwestern, and he was able to graduate in the spring of 1957. Although he had no prior experience for this position, Nicholson had been an excellent student during his study at Southwestern and was eager to assist the school in that capacity.

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<sup>38</sup> Nicholson, interview, December 18, 2006.

TEXAS WESLEYAN COLLEGE  
Division of Fine Arts  
presents  
→ JOE NICHOLSON, Trombonist ←  
RHEALENE STEWART, Accompanist  
in  
SENIOR RECITAL  
Assisted by Brass Ensemble

1957

Friday, January 18, 1957

Fine Arts Auditorium

8:15 p. m.

PROGRAM

I.

Apres un Reve Sonata in E Flat Rather fast Scherzo Chorale Finale	Mr. Nicholson	Faure Sanders
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II.

Concerto in F Minor Grave Allegro Sarabande Allegro	Mr. Nicholson	Handel-Lafosse
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III.

Tarantella Two Intradas	Brass Ensemble — A. Wesley Tower, Conductor Brass Ensemble Personnel: Steve Fleming and Don Moorhead, trumpet; Bill Miller, horn; Joe Nicholson, Keith Burns, and Oren Paris, trombone.	Fitzgerald M. Franck
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This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree Bachelor of Music.

Figure 8. Nicholson's senior recital program (1957).

Nicholson was hired at Southwestern due in large part to the founding of Evangel College in 1955. Evangel, located in Springfield, MO, was founded to be the national college for the arts and sciences for the Assemblies of God (AG) denomination. Evangel's administration recruited the top faculty members from the other AG colleges, and because Southwestern was considered to be among the best AG schools at the time, many of the faculty were employed at Evangel. Nicholson's former teacher at Southwestern, Peterson, was hired to teach at Evangel in 1956, and because Nicholson was known by the administration at Southwestern, he was hired part-time to fill his former teacher's position.

#### Full-Time Teaching at Southwestern and the Masters Degree

Upon his degree completion at Texas Wesleyan in 1957, Nicholson became a full-time faculty member at Southwestern. The move from Fort Worth to Waxahachie was delayed a year, however, because Jo Ellen was completing her last year of nursing school, and was pregnant with their first child. This necessitated a forty-mile daily commute during the 1957-1958 school year. The Nicholsons' first daughter, Jorita Mildred, was born in January 1958.

Nicholson's teaching duties at Southwestern included Theory/Aural Training, Wind Lessons, and Band Directing. During the 1958-1959 school year, Nicholson became the music department chair at Southwestern. Because he was quite young, the faculty members were unsure of Nicholson's ability to handle the position. As a compromise, they divided the department chair position into a committee of which Nicholson became the chair. Shortly thereafter, Nicholson earned the trust of the faculty,

and the committee was dissolved, leaving Nicholson to be the sole chair of the department.<sup>39</sup> He held the department chair position for two years.

The Nicholsons maintained a busy schedule during their stay in Waxahachie from 1958 to 1960. Jo Ellen, now a Registered Nurse, was employed by a local doctor and at the Waxahachie hospital. The couple lived in the “Faculty Mansion” that was owned by Southwestern. The “Faculty Mansion” was an older two-story house that Southwestern divided into four apartments, and rented to faculty members. Because Nicholson was earning a very small wage while teaching at Southwestern, the “Faculty Mansion” allowed them to live economically.<sup>40</sup>

Nicholson began his Master of Music in Education at North Texas State College (later renamed the University of North Texas) in 1958. He enrolled in weekend and summer courses, and because he was teaching full-time at Southwestern, did not complete the Master of Music Education degree until 1961. While at North Texas, Nicholson was able to perform in the Wind Ensemble conducted by Maurice McAdow (1904-2001) and the One O’clock Stage Band, led by Leon Breeden (b. 1921). During the traditional school year, he could attend only one or two classes and perform in one or two ensembles. During the summer session, however, Nicholson rented an apartment in Denton where he was able to devote himself fulltime to classes and ensembles. The highlights of his summer experiences included playing in a number of the summer concerts at North Texas.

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<sup>39</sup> Nicholson, interview, January 16, 2007.

<sup>40</sup> Nicholson, interview, February 20, 2007.

At North Texas, Nicholson studied trombone with Leon Brown, and performed one recital even though this was not a degree requirement. Brown assigned Nicholson to study Pryor solos while he was at North Texas, as well as other music materials. Nicholson described Brown as being a “quiet encourager” in lessons and considered him to be a friend and mentor throughout his life.<sup>41</sup>

Nicholson believed that his teaching was greatly enhanced by his study at North Texas, especially in the area of music theory. He enrolled in two courses with the renowned music theorist, Robert W. Ottman (b. 1914). Nicholson’s grades from his undergraduate degree were not outstanding, but his work in graduate school was markedly better. He stated,

“My teaching was such an asset to my learning. When you teach something, you learn it and I was teaching theory at Southwestern during my Masters degree at UNT. So, when I went to take my exit exams for the Masters degree, I only missed one question of all the questions for the theory test. I was studying it to teach and when you are studying to teach, you are not going to get up in front of a class and embarrass yourself, you are going to know the answers to the student’s questions.”<sup>42</sup>

Nicholson’s studies at North Texas provided a strong foundation in music learning that continued throughout his career.

Nicholson’s formative years were spent in Fruita, CO, where he was surrounded by music in his family, church, and school. He played both trombone and euphonium in the music program at Fruita Union High School and received private lessons from the

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<sup>41</sup> Nicholson, interview, December 18, 2006.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

band director at the school. Nicholson attended Southwestern Bible Institute during his senior year of high school and his first two years of college. While at Southwestern, he studied music, toured the country, and met his future wife. After marriage in 1955, Nicholson transferred to Texas Wesleyan College. During his senior year at Texas Wesleyan College, Nicholson became a part-time member of the faculty at Southwestern, and became a full-time faculty member at Southwestern after graduation in 1957. In 1958, he was appointed to be the chair of the music department at Southwestern, and also began work toward his Master of Music Education degree at North Texas State College. His tenure at Southwestern ended in 1960, when Nicholson became a faculty member at Evangel College in Springfield, MO.

### CHAPTER III

#### NICHOLSON'S AFFILIATION WITH EVANGEL COLLEGE AND THE SPRINGFIELD (MO) SYMPHONY

The study of music was integral to the founding of Evangel College because the school was the designated national college for the arts and sciences of the Assemblies of God denomination. Thus, the Music Department at Evangel was integral to the school. Nicholson credited the first two department chairs, Leslie Stubbs (chair 1955-1960) and Jesse Peterson (chair 1960-1965) for building strength in the music program.<sup>43</sup> He recalled that the music department embraced what he termed a “bipartite” teaching philosophy.<sup>44</sup> The first part was to insure that Evangel graduates could express themselves well as performers, and the second was to insure that Evangel graduates knew the subject matter well.<sup>45</sup> Nicholson embraced the Evangel Music Department philosophy because he believed that it mirrored his own education at Texas Wesleyan.<sup>46</sup>

#### The Early Years

Joseph Nicholson joined the faculty of Evangel College in the fall of 1960. Jesse Peterson, Nicholson's former teacher at Southwestern, had been appointed to become the

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Nicholson, interview, January 16, 2007.

<sup>46</sup> Nicholson, interview, December 18, 2006.

Music Department chair at Evangel the same year Nicholson was hired. Peterson knew that Nicholson was qualified to be a faculty member based upon their prior experience together. Nicholson recalled that, “Jesse, more than any other person, was responsible for my coming to teach at Evangel.”<sup>47</sup> Nicholson was hired initially as a brass specialist, but because Evangel was a small and developing college, he was required to teach other courses as needed. He taught the Brass Techniques course for music education majors, and during his first few years at Evangel, he also taught woodwind students when Peterson’s teaching load was extensive. Also, Nicholson was the assistant band director during his first few years at Evangel and recalled that he performed in the band himself to augment the instrumentation as well as conducting several works during his first years at Evangel. Nicholson, however, did not aspire to be the band director at Evangel, and thus, when Peterson left Evangel, did not assume that role.

As stated, Nicholson taught all brass instruments during the first few years of his teaching at Evangel. He maintained a full teaching load, and often an overload through private lessons and other courses for which he was responsible. During the early years, Nicholson consistently taught between 20 and 35 private lessons every semester, as well as other courses. Nicholson recalled his confidence in teaching all of the different brass instruments:

I knew the brass instruments well. I knew every fingering and every range of all the brass instruments and I was good enough that I could transpose any of the parts at sight. If I sat down to play with a horn student and I had my trombone in

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<sup>47</sup> Nicholson, retirement speech, January 14, 1999.



hand, I could read the horn part and transpose it in my head to get the matching notes a fifth apart.<sup>48</sup>

Figures 9 depicts Nicholson teaching trombone, and in Figure 10, his shown teaching horn.



Figure 9. Nicholson teaching a trombone lesson at Evangel (ca. 1961).

Nicholson also developed the brass ensemble as a course within the curriculum. He recalled:

Jesse Peterson had done some work with [the brass ensemble], but he was so broadly based, he couldn't do too much with the brass ensemble. So, I really took the brass ensemble and developed it into a program that was structured, and became part of the curriculum. Students could even enroll in it for credit.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Nicholson, interview, December 18, 2006.

<sup>49</sup> Nicholson, interview, February 20, 2007.

Nicholson's main teaching responsibility at Evangel remained the teaching of brass instruments throughout his tenure.



Figure 10. Nicholson teaching a horn lesson at Evangel (ca. 1969).

Nicholson was active in recruiting at Evangel, especially to students who were affiliated with the AG denomination. The AG held a national Teen Talent Program in which students could participate. Whenever a brass player entered the Teen Talent Program, Nicholson immediately sent the student a personal note along with information about the school. As Evangel's reputation grew, Nicholson was required to recruit students less. He did not make a concerted effort to recruit students outside the AG

denomination, but occasionally taught an advanced high school student with the hope that the student might enroll at Evangel.<sup>50</sup>

When the Evangel College band and chorus toured Europe during the summer of 1964, Nicholson served as associate director, conductor of the brass choir, and trombone soloist. He performed solo trombone arrangements of *The Lord's Prayer* and *The Holy City* in a number of European cities including: Glasgow, London, Amsterdam, Stockholm, Copenhagen, Frankfurt, Brussels, and Geneva. As part of the tour, the ensemble recorded a concert for the U.S. Armed Forces Radio in Europe.<sup>51</sup> The purpose of the tour was to promote Evangel and provide the students with an experience that broadened their outlook upon the world. This tour was Nicholson's first trip out of the United States.

In the fall of 1965, Peterson left Evangel to pursue a music recording venture in Kansas City, and that following school year (1965-1966), Edna Baker (1919-2006) became the interim Music Department Chair. In the fall of 1966, Nicholson was appointed Chair of the Music Department, a position he held for 15 years. That same year, John Shows (b. 1944) was hired part-time to teach the upper brass instruments and conduct the band, and thus, Nicholson was no longer required to teach all brass instruments. At this time Nicholson assumed the responsibility for teaching two more classes, the instrumental materials class, and the instrumental conducting class. Later in the fall of 1972, he began to teach the first-year theory course. Nicholson recalled his

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

enjoyment in teaching the first-year theory course. As Department Chair, teaching the first-year theory course allowed him to become acquainted with all the music majors and minors in the Evangel College Music Department. Nicholson recalled:

I met the students and learned every name of every student in my classes. I made it a point to do that during the very first semester. If they stayed for three or four years, by the time they graduated, I knew them well. So for many years, I was able to say with confidence, “He or she was an Evangel music graduate.” I knew every alumnus by name, because I had taught them in theory class during those years.<sup>52</sup>

The theory course was his approach toward establishing the expectation of the Evangel College Music Department. Nicholson expected the students to master the fundamentals of music, and the theory course was his opportunity to build a foundation of music learning and achievement with every student.

Nicholson was a gifted writer and researcher and used his abilities to greatly aid Evangel’s accreditation process. Peterson recalled, “Joe was and is an excellent researcher. He had the skills of putting things together and he was able to help greatly in writing our self-study at Evangel for the accreditation of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).”<sup>53</sup> Shows remembered, “When the time arrived for a NASM reaccreditation [while I was department chair], I asked Joe to write a major portion of the self-study document. He was a good writer, and he could articulate things very well.” Throughout his years at Evangel College, Nicholson’s ability to write

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<sup>52</sup> Nicholson, interview, December 18, 2006.

<sup>53</sup> Jesse Peterson, phone interview, February 13, 2007.



and present information was considered to be an asset to the college and the music department.

In 1970, Evangel became an accredited member of the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), and was pronounced to be a full institutional member. In Figure 11, Nicholson is depicted accepting the NASM membership certificate from president Carl M. Neumeyer, on behalf of Evangel College. Achieving NASM membership had become a goal of the Evangel College music faculty from the very



Figure 11. President Carl M. Neumeyer (r.) of NASM presented Evangel's certificate of membership in the Association to Nicholson (1970).

founding of the school, and Nicholson was the proud Department Chair when that goal was realized. The achievement by Evangel College also was noteworthy because Evangel was the first and has continued to be, the only AG College to be a full institutional member of NASM.

#### The Springfield (MO) Symphony and Brass Quintet

In 1966, Nicholson was offered the principal trombone position in the Springfield (MO) Symphony. Conductor Charles Hall (n.d.) recently had been hired by the Springfield Symphony, and at his request, Nicholson joined the ensemble. Unlike orchestral trombone openings later in the twentieth century, an open audition for the position was not held. Nicholson recalled that all of the orchestra members held full-time positions in other areas of work, and were paid only a small honorarium for their services for each of the rehearsals and 10 to 12 performances per year.<sup>54</sup>

Nicholson also had the opportunity to perform with a number of quality trombonists as the principal trombonist in the Springfield Symphony. The first year Nicholson performed with the Springfield Symphony, other trombonists in the section included Charles Mahaffey and Leon Bradley. Mahaffey played second trombone and was a public school music teacher. Bradley played bass trombone and was a professor of music at College of the Ozarks in Branson, MO. Others who played with the Springfield Symphony during Nicholson's tenure were trombonists Jim O'Neal, Gordon Calame, L.A. Ormsby, and Bill Hartmann.

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<sup>54</sup> Nicholson, interview, December 18, 2006.

Several of Nicholson's students from Evangel College also were afforded the opportunity to perform in the Springfield Symphony during and after Nicholson's tenure. The first Evangel student trombonist to play with the Springfield Symphony was Ken Bass, an Evangel student during the early 1970s. Steve Wolfinbarger was an Evangel student from 1975 to 1979 and won an audition for the second trombone position in 1977. Wolfinbarger played with the Springfield Symphony during the 1978-1979 season, at which point he left Springfield to attend graduate school. Ken Shrum, an Evangel student from 1977 to 1981, was a substitute trombonist in the Springfield Symphony during his senior year at Evangel. Michael Kolstad, an Evangel student from 1984 to 1988, also was an occasional substitute trombonist in the orchestra. In 1992, Kolstad was appointed to the faculty at Evangel College to replace Nicholson, and when he assumed that position at the school, he auditioned and became the fourth trombone in the Springfield Symphony and a member of the Springfield Symphony Brass Quintet.

Nicholson also was a founding member of the Springfield Symphony Brass Quintet (Springfield Brass Quintet) in 1966. The Springfield Brass Quintet included players from the orchestra and the founding members were Richard Norment, first trumpet; David Borden, second trumpet; Willard Gully, horn; Nicholson, trombone; and Dr. Yates Trotter, tuba. Figure 12 is a 1966 publicity photo for the Springfield Brass Quintet. The primary function of the Brass Quintet was to perform school concerts to promote the arts and the orchestra, and Nicholson recalled that the quintet maintained a performance schedule in the schools combined with an occasional fall or spring concert.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.



Figure 12. The Springfield Brass Quintet publicity photo (1966), *left to right*, Richard Norment, David Borden, Yates Trotter, Willard Gulley, and Joseph Nicholson.

The idea for starting a brass quintet developed from Nicholson's studies with Irving Miller at the University of Missouri at Kansas City (UMKC). Miller, a member of the Kansas City Brass Quintet, introduced Nicholson to the idea of establishing a brass quintet to become musical ambassadors in the public school system and a liaison with the orchestra. Nicholson felt a sense of accomplishment playing in a brass quintet and



believed the Springfield Brass Quintet was a valuable addition to the arts in the community.<sup>56</sup>

Nicholson served eleven years as principal trombonist in the Springfield Symphony. He recalled experiences in being able to play a substantial component of the standard orchestral literature during his tenure. As a trombonist, he valued the experience of performing the solos from a number of works, especially Ferde Grofé's (1892-1972) *Grand Canyon Suite* (1931) and Maurice Ravel's (1875-1937) *Bolero* (1929), among others.<sup>57</sup>

Nicholson relinquished his position as principal trombonist in 1977 because of his increased time constraints. His schedule was overloaded at Evangel, he was the church orchestra director at Central Assembly of God in Springfield, and he was participating actively in overseas teaching and ministry. Also, the symphony schedule was conflicting with time he needed to devote to his family.

#### Nicholson's Private Studio

During his years at Evangel College, Nicholson was a teacher of many private students, and every year his studio was a large part of his teaching load. His students remembered him as being a compassionate teacher who demanded a high level of achievement in performance. Former students also remembered Nicholson's love for brass history, especially the trombone. As a result of his influence, many of his students have become respected teachers and performers. Nicholson was an educator who truly

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

was concerned about the welfare of his students. His students recalled him as being very consistent in the way he treated them. Nicholson's students knew about his interest in them because of his willingness to give counsel, encourage, and pray for them. Many students remembered important decisions in which he gave them wise counsel. As a consistent and dependable mentor, Nicholson's students knew that he supported them.

Nicholson regularly accompanied his students on trips to the Midwest Trombone Workshop. Kolstad recalled:

I remember attending a Midwest Trombone Workshop at the University of Missouri at Columbia. I was sitting in the front seat of the van on the way and Dr. Nicholson and I were talking about graduate schools. He mentioned Dr. Randy Kohlenberg from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and that is how I ended up meeting Dr. Kohlenberg.<sup>58</sup>

His students recalled with fondness the trips to the Midwest Trombone Workshop.

Nicholson was known for his hospitality and frequently entertained students in his home during the holiday season. Shrum recalled a couple of meals at the Nicholson house:

It was like a big huge family atmosphere. We all sat around a big table and had a good time. Afterward we all washed dishes because Dr. Nicholson's expectations were, the first time [you visit] you're a guest, the second time [you visit] you wash dishes.<sup>59</sup>

Figure 13 shows a group of students and Nicholson playing Christmas music in his home.

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<sup>58</sup> Michael Kolstad, interview, December 18, 2006.

<sup>59</sup> Ken Shrum, phone interview, January 16, 2007.



Figure 13. Nicholson and a quartet of students playing Christmas music at Nicholson's house (ca. 1986).

Because Nicholson taught at a Christian college, he was allowed to encourage his students through his faith in Jesus Christ. Lessons with him frequently contained a short bible study or prayer to encourage the student.<sup>60</sup> Nicholson considered prayer to be vital to his teaching, and he devoted lesson time to pray with a student if the student had a problem or concern. He viewed prayer to be a way of talking with God about life and an acknowledgement of the need for God's help. According to his students, his prayers were a great source of comfort and strength.<sup>61</sup>

As discussed earlier, Nicholson demanded a high level of achievement in performance from each of his private students. Because he was himself an outstanding

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<sup>60</sup> Kolstad, interview.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

performer with high expectations, students were held accountable to a similar standard. Nicholson required his students to log their practice hours, and when he believed they were not devoting their best effort, addressed the issue. His students recalled that frequently he was forthright when he believed they were underachieving. Shrum recalled, “You didn’t want to go to a lesson and try to fake your way through it. He could see through that fairly quickly. He was never mean or angry about your lack of effort, but he was never shy about ‘calling your bluff’ so to speak.”<sup>62</sup> Nicholson’s demanding expectations typically were seasoned with compassion and encouragement to frustrated students. That compassion allowed him to be stern with his students although never demeaning or condescending.<sup>63</sup>

Nicholson employed standard literature and consistently stressed the fundamentals of music in his lessons. A typical lesson with him began with a duet or scales and his students recalled that he enjoyed playing duets.<sup>64</sup> Scales were a priority in lessons, and each lesson contained some scale performance to determine mastery. Nicholson utilized standard low brass study materials such as: *The Melodious Etudes of Marco Bordogni*, transcribed and edited by Johannes Rochut, *Arban’s Complete Method for Trombone and Euphonium*, the studies of Vladislav Blazhevich, and many others. He was known for his attention to detail, and his students were constantly reminded to be accurate in performance. Kolstad recalled, “Nicholson was a real stickler for rhythm, and

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<sup>62</sup> Shrum, interview.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

I remember doing a lot of counting out and clapping rhythm exercises.”<sup>65</sup> Nicholson’s instruction equipped his students with a strong foundation in brass performance technique.

Nicholson also stressed music research and writing in his private studio. Because he was a historical researcher and writer himself, Nicholson believed that his students needed to acquire a basic knowledge of the history of the instrument. Thus, he required all of his low brass music majors to write a five-page paper about the history of their instrument, and the paper was a component of every student’s lesson grade. Nicholson’s students distinctly remember writing the paper, and several have kept the paper. In fact Wolfinbarger know exactly where the paper is kept.<sup>66</sup> Wolfinbarger, professor of trombone at Western Michigan University, believed writing a paper about the history of the trombone was important. Although he has not required his own students to write a similar paper about the history of the trombone, Wolfinbarger has allowed an assignment of the paper as a means for obtaining extra credit in a student’s private lesson grade.<sup>67</sup> By requiring a paper about the history of their instrument, Nicholson had a positive impact on his students.

As stated earlier, Nicholson maintained a robust private studio throughout his teaching career at Evangel College. Among the faculty members in the Evangel College music department, Nicholson’s private studio traditionally was viewed to be an asset to

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<sup>65</sup> Kolstad, interview.

<sup>66</sup> Steve Wolfinbarger, phone interview, January 20, 2007. Wolfinbarger has a copy of the paper he wrote for Nicholson on the office bookshelf at his house.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

the department. Nicholson's private studio boasted an outstanding reputation both at Evangel College and throughout the area. Peterson recalled,

His private studio turned out some of the really, really fine brass people. In fact, Norman Dello Joio had written *Variants on a Medieval Tune (In dulce jubilo)*, a piece for symphonic band. It was being premiered at the College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA) and they were taking audition tapes for the honor of premiering the piece. The Evangel College band was selected over many of the big universities including Michigan. The selection was largely due to the incredible private teaching that was going on in the private studios. It was exciting because a lot of my friends were large college band and or orchestra conductors. One of the very reputable band directors came to me after hearing our performance and said, "Where in the world did you find that trumpet player?" I said, he is a senior, but if you had had him when he came to us, you would have put him in your fourth band. After hearing that, he kind of blinked and said, "I'll tell you what, he can do anything he wants to."<sup>68</sup>

Band directors across the country respected Nicholson's private studio after that performance, and his studio continued to be fundamental to the Evangel College Music Department.

Nicholson also taught several students who became influential teachers and performers in music. Wolfenbarger was one of Nicholson's most accomplished students while at Evangel College, who after graduating from Evangel College in 1979 (BME, Trombone), earned his Master of Music and D.M.A. in Trombone Performance from North Texas State University (later renamed the University of North Texas). Active in the International Trombone Association, first as president of the organization from 1994 to 1996, and subsequently as Director of the International Trombone Festival,

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<sup>68</sup> Peterson, interview.

Wolfinbarger became the professor of Trombone at Western Michigan University in 1986.

Another former student, Stephen Plate played both piano and tuba at Evangel and graduated from Evangel in 1979 (BME, Piano). In 1981, he became a member of the faculty at Evangel College and the tuba player in the Evangel College Faculty Brass Quintet. Plate earned his Master of Music and D.M.A. in conducting from the Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati. He is the former fine arts department chair at Gardner-Webb University, and currently is the Dean of the School of Music at Lee University in Cleveland, Tennessee. Plate has conducted orchestras throughout the world and formerly was the Music Director of the Charlotte, NC, Civic Orchestra.

Ken Shrum began his study at Evangel College as a communications major, but later became a music major and graduated in 1981 (BME, Trombone and Euphonium). He earned the Master of Music in Trombone Performance from the University of Missouri at Kansas City, and in 1986, joined the Naval Academy Band as a euphoniumist. In 1989, Shrum finished his D.M.A. in Euphonium Performance from Arizona State University. He is only the second member of the Naval Academy Band to have earned a doctoral degree while on active-duty.

Michael Kolstad began his studies at Evangel College first as a computer science major. He became a music major, however, his sophomore year (1985), and graduated from Evangel College in 1988 (BME, Trombone). Nicholson and Kolstad are shown

together in Figure 14, following Kolstad's senior recital at Evangel. Kolstad continued his studies by earning his Master of Music in Trombone Performance from the University



Figure 14. Nicholson and Kolstad shown together on the stage of the old Fine Arts Auditorium at Evangel College after Kolstad's senior recital (1988).

of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG). After beginning study for the D.M.A. in trombone performance at UNCG, he was hired to be Nicholson's successor at Evangel College in 1992. Kolstad later completed the D.M.A. from UNCG in 1995. He has been



scheduled to become the department chair at Evangel University in Fall 2007, succeeding Shows.

Nicholson's students remembered him as a compassionate teacher who demanded a high level of achievement in performance. He focused upon the importance of knowing the history of brass instruments, especially the trombone. Many of Nicholson's students have become successful teachers and performers, and his impact upon their teaching and performance is part of his legacy as a teacher. Figure 15 is a publicity photo of Nicholson from the 1980s.



Figure 15. Publicity photo of Nicholson holding his Conn 88H (ca. 1987).

### Later Years and Retirement

In 1981, Nicholson retired from the chairmanship of the Music Department at Evangel College, having served in that position for 15 years. During that time, many positive changes occurred in the Evangel College Music Department, the most significant of which was being awarded full institutional membership in the NASM. The music department also added several full time faculty members, a number of whom held doctoral degrees in their field of study. Nicholson believed that the timing of his departure from the department chair was important. He related,

I had always held to a principle that it's good to step down while you are still wanted. I think some people have had trouble doing that. They hung on longer than they should have and it would reach a point where people were pressuring them to get out or eager for them to go. When you leave in that kind of atmosphere, you don't have the legacy that you could have if you leave while you're still in demand and wanted, while you're still being productive and useful.<sup>69</sup>

He believed the time was right to relinquish his chairmanship to allow junior faculty members to take leadership roles in the department.

When Nicholson relinquished his position as the department chair at Evangel in 1981, Shows was appointed to the position. During the first few years of his appointment, Shows worked closely with Nicholson. Shows recalled:

[Nicholson] gave me latitude to shape the department a little bit, but there weren't major changes that I made to the curriculum because the curriculum was designed well from the beginning. I would call on Joe when I needed help...Joe was still a liaison with the administration even though he wasn't department chair. I could

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<sup>69</sup> Nicholson, interview, February 20, 2007.

count on him to put in a good word or say the right thing, at the right time, to the right people. So, he was easy to work with.<sup>70</sup>

Nicholson and Shows have continued a close association through the years based upon their friendship developed at Evangel.

Nicholson was still an active member of the Evangel College faculty after his tenure as department chair. In 1983, the Evangel College Concert Band traveled to Europe, and Nicholson once again served as the tour manager, and was accompanied by his wife. Figure 16 depicts him next to a publicity sign announcing the Evangel College Concert Band in France.



Figure 16. Nicholson, standing next to a French publicity sign, during the Evangel College Concert Band European Tour (1983).

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<sup>70</sup> Shows, interview.

After he ended his tenure in the Springfield Symphony and Springfield Brass Quintet in 1977, he became a founding member of the Evangel College Faculty Brass Quintet in 1981 because he was interested in continuing to play in a quintet.<sup>71</sup> The members of the Evangel Brass Quintet are shown in Figure 17.



Figure 17. Evangel Brass Quintet (ca. 1987), *left to right*, Richard Miles, Mark Porter, Stephen Plate, John Shows and Joseph Nicholson.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.



The Evangel Brass Quintet performed occasional concerts throughout the year although they never accepted a fee, and rather played solely on a volunteer basis.<sup>72</sup>

The leader of the group was Nicholson, although Plate, Shows, and Miles provided input about the musical selections for the ensemble. Miles assembled a library of brass quintet pieces for the group that he later donated to the Evangel College music department. The ensemble changed members twice during Nicholson's tenure, first when Mark Porter replaced Clinton Story on horn, and second when Ken Swanson replaced Stephen Plate on tuba. Figure 18 shows the Evangel Brass Quintet near the end of the 1980s with their new tuba player, Ken Swanson.



Figure 18. Evangel Brass Quintet on the old Fine Arts Auditorium stage (ca. 1989), *left to right*, John Shows, Richard Miles, Ken Swanson, Mark Porter and Joseph Nicholson.

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<sup>72</sup> Nicholson, phone interview, February 20, 2007.

The Evangel College Faculty Brass Quintet has continued to perform at Evangel, and is now led by Shows and Kolstad. Figure 19 depicts the Evangel Brass Quintet performing at the Springfield Shopping Mall.



Figure 19. Evangel Brass Quintet performing at the Springfield Shopping Mall (ca. 1990), *left to right*, John Shows, Richard Miles, Ken Swanson, Mark Porter and Joseph Nicholson.

In 1991, Nicholson retired from teaching at Evangel College after 31 years of service and became Vice President for Academic Affairs at Berean University (now Global University). Berean University was the correspondence institution for the AG denomination, where future pastors and missionaries could obtain degrees. Nicholson had considered the possibility that he might retire early, but the schedule required in his



new position at Berean was demanding. In 1999, he retired from both teaching and administration and currently resides in Springfield, MO, with his wife. Upon his retirement, Evangel granted Nicholson the honor of being named Professor Emeritus. Figure 20 shows Nicholson receiving a commemorative plaque.



Figure 20. Nicholson receiving his Professor Emeritus commemorative plaque from Evangel President Robert H. Spence (May 7, 1999).

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DOCTORAL DEGREE, TROMBONE RESEARCH, WRITINGS, AND PRESENTATIONS

Nicholson was a dedicated scholar who was able to communicate well through his writing. While studying at UMKC, he developed a passion for researching the history of the trombone. This passion led Nicholson to write a dissertation and a number of articles in the area of trombone history and literature. Through his publications, he provided a foundation for other writers who discovered new information about the history and development of the trombone. Nicholson's body of research was an important instrument for helping to build a more comprehensive history of the trombone and its literature in a single source.

#### The Doctoral Degree

During the 1963-1964 school year, Nicholson began to pursue study for the Doctor of Musical Arts (D.M.A.) at the Music Conservatory of the University of Missouri at Kansas City (UMKC). In 1967, he was the first student to graduate from UMKC with a D.M.A. in trombone performance. Nicholson's Doctoral Committee included members Merton Shatzkin, John Swanay, Archie Jones and Irving Miller. Shatzkin, a professor of violin and music literature at UMKC, was the chair of Nicholson's doctoral committee. Swanay was a professor of music history at UMKC and Nicholson's primary motivator for his study of the history and development of the



trombone.<sup>73</sup> Jones was the Dean of the conservatory and Miller was the professor of trombone performance at UMKC, who Nicholson considered his most influential trombone pedagogue.<sup>74</sup>

Nicholson chose to pursue the D.M.A. at UMKC for two primary reasons. His first reason was to reinforce his performance skills to better educate his students at Evangel. Nicholson's second reason was to develop the reputation of the Music Department at Evangel by earning his doctorate. He knew he could further his learning at the Conservatory of Music at UMKC because of the school's strong reputation for performance.<sup>75</sup>

Nicholson met Irving "Ozzie" Miller coincidentally in the UMKC Cafeteria when he first visited the UMKC campus.<sup>76</sup> Miller, the trombone professor at UMKC, also held the principal trombone position in the Kansas City Philharmonic Orchestra and was a member of the Kansas City Brass Quintet. Nicholson and Miller established an immediate rapport, and Miller provided assistance for Nicholson to become a student at UMKC.<sup>77</sup> When Nicholson began to study with Miller, Nicholson was asked to purchase a new instrument. As with many professional trombonists of the time, Miller played on a Conn 88H and recommended that instrument to Nicholson.

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<sup>73</sup> Nicholson, interview, December 18, 2006.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

Miller inspired Nicholson to be an outstanding performer. Nicholson recalled that Miller expected a high level of performance, although he gave Nicholson some flexibility in selecting what material would be covered in lessons. Miller did not emphasize the technical aspects of playing the trombone, but Nicholson did recall practicing articulation exercises from the *Arban Complete Method for Trombone and Euphonium*.<sup>78</sup> Nicholson also remembered studying the best available music literature with Miller including the unaccompanied *Cello Suites* by J.S. Bach.<sup>79</sup>

Nicholson was the first trombone D.M.A. graduate from the fledgling doctoral program at UMKC. The first D.M.A. degree at UMKC was awarded in 1963, the same year that Nicholson began his studies. The former Kansas City University had only become a member of the Missouri State University system in 1960, and Figure 21 depicts Nicholson's diploma, one of the first D.M.A. diplomas to be awarded at the renamed UMKC. Nicholson initially had been unaware of the fact that he was the first trombone D.M.A. student at UMKC although he was the only trombone D.M.A. student at UMKC during his years of study. He did recall that the faculty members at UMKC assisted him and he believed that, "from the very first years, the faculty showed [him] favor."<sup>80</sup> Nicholson structured his program of study around courses that he believed would help him in his teaching at Evangel. He studied conducting with Russell Patterson (b. 1929), the director of the Kansas City Lyric Opera, and a well-known figure in the

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

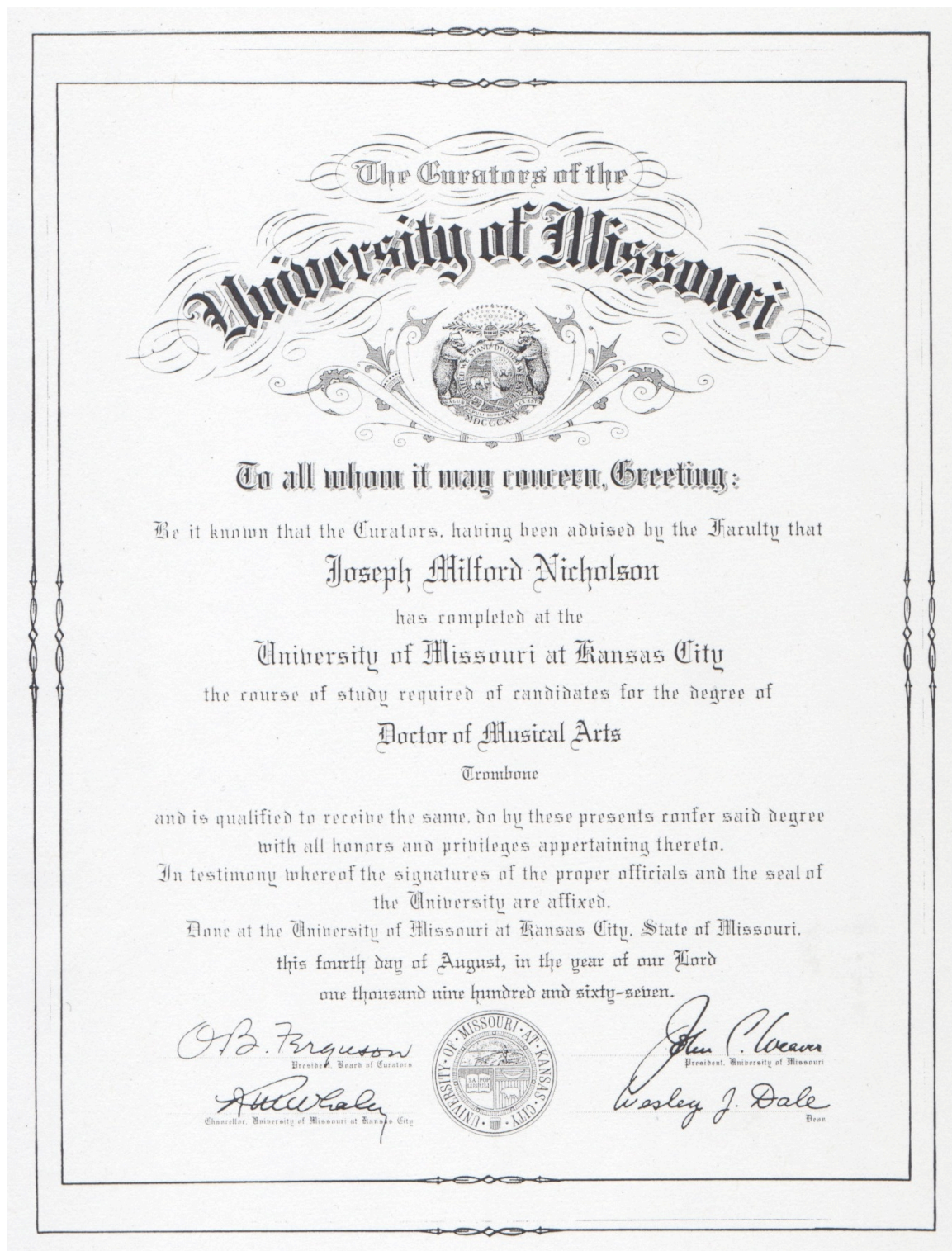


Figure 21. Nicholson's DMA diploma from UMKC (1967).

Kansas City arts community. Nicholson studied conducting privately with Patterson and took Patterson's classes in conducting, instrumental materials, and Richard Wagner while at UMKC. Nicholson recalled that Patterson had very high expectations for his students and Nicholson was proud to have earned all A grades in Patterson's classes.<sup>81</sup>

Nicholson's committee chair at UMKC was Merton Shatzkin, a professor of music history, theory, and violin, and a member of the Resident String Quartet at UMKC. Although Shatzkin had been recently hired at UMKC, he was qualified and willing to be Nicholson's committee chair.<sup>82</sup> Nicholson recalled that Shatzkin guided his program of study and advised Nicholson through the program.<sup>83</sup> Shatzkin was Nicholson's primary advisor during the writing phase of Nicholson's degree, and Shatzkin recalled that Nicholson provided all the content for the document.<sup>84</sup>

During the first few semesters of his doctoral degree, Nicholson fulfilled a residency requirement that stipulated he become a full-time student, which meant he was required to take 9 credit hours each semester. While he was a full-time student at UMKC, he also taught a full course load at Evangel. Nicholson recalled his rigorous schedule:

I was commuting at first and I would board a bus in Springfield at about 2:00 AM on a Tuesday. I would sleep on the bus and then check into a fleabag hotel in

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Shatzkin was hired to teach at UMKC in 1963.

<sup>83</sup> Nicholson, interview, December 18, 2006.

<sup>84</sup> Merton Shatzkin, interview, February 14, 2007.

Kansas City at about 6:00 AM, to sleep before heading to class. I met my residency requirement that way.<sup>85</sup>

Nicholson indeed pursued a very busy schedule during his residency period at UMKC.

Nicholson studied the early history of the trombone throughout his doctoral degree, and he became more interested in the instrument, frequently referred to as a *sackbut*, through Larry Sutherland, professor of trombone at the University of Missouri at Columbia (UMC). He met Sutherland at a trombone workshop and spoke to him about the sackbut. Sutherland had access to a set of sackbuts owned by UMC, and allowed Nicholson to borrow one of the tenor sackbuts. Thus, Nicholson was able to gain experience playing the instrument. He had intended to play the UMC sackbut on his first doctoral recital, but Sutherland could not allow Nicholson to use the UMC owned instrument on a UMKC recital.<sup>86</sup> Nicholson, therefore, was forced to perform his first doctoral recital of early music on his modern trombone.

Nicholson's spark for learning about early music performance came from another member of his D.M.A. committee, John Swanay. Swanay was a professor of music history at UMKC interested in early music performance. Nicholson recalled performing early operas as part of Swanay's classes.<sup>87</sup> Swanay played the recorder in performances of early music, and also was interested in the use of the sackbut. Nicholson registered for

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<sup>85</sup> Nicholson, interview, December 18, 2006.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

several history courses with Swanay in which he was encouraged to continue to pursue research into the early use of the trombone.

Nicholson completed his D.M.A. program in the summer of 1967, and his final recital was given on August 1, 1967. Nicholson had completed his coursework and exams by that point, and had fulfilled the school's language requirement through his study of French. When he completed the D.M.A., Nicholson became the first music faculty member at an AG college to have earned a doctoral degree.

#### A Historical Background of the Trombone and Its Music

The D.M.A. program at UMKC required each student to perform two recitals as part of the degree requirements. The first recital was a lecture recital, and Nicholson chose to discuss the "physical and tonal evolution of the trombone from its origin through the eighteenth century" as his topic.<sup>88</sup> He selected works for the recital that illustrated the different uses of the instrument. Nicholson utilized a wide variety of period instruments for his lecture recital including trombones, recorders, krummhorns, zink, and strings.<sup>89</sup> His second recital was a solo recital that emphasized the use of the trombone as a solo instrument and he performed trombone solos from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>90</sup>

Along with his two recitals, Nicholson also wrote a document to present information about the trombone and its literature. The document entitled, "A Historical

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<sup>88</sup> Joseph M Nicholson, "A Historical Background of the Trombone and its Music," D.M.A. diss., University of Missouri at Kansas City, 1967.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

Background of the Trombone and Its Music,” contained a summary of his research into the development and use of the trombone. As discussed earlier, Nicholson was encouraged by Swanay to study the development of the trombone. Nicholson recalled reading Gustave Reese’s text, *Music in the Renaissance*, in one of Swanay’s classes. Nicholson considered Reese’s book to be the starting point for much of his research into the early history of the trombone.<sup>91</sup>

The first chapter of Nicholson’s document began with a discussion on the word *trombone* and its different origins, such as the Italian *tromba*, the German *posaune* and the Spanish *sacabuche*. Nicholson also dealt with the physical design and purpose of the early instrument, from the development of the slide through the instrument’s characteristic S-shape. In the second chapter of Nicholson’s thesis, he described the physical construction of the trombone during its early years and the implications for modern performance practice. Nicholson then dealt with the common early musical uses of the trombone and the obsolete instruments with which it was associated, such as the *zinc*, *lute*, *viol*, *rebec* and *krumhorn*. Nicholson concluded the chapter with a discussion advocating educated performance of early music that focuses upon proper style and mood. Nicholson’s third chapter was a series of program notes for the six renaissance pieces played on his first recital: Guillaume Dufay’s *Mon chier amy*, Bartolomeo Tromboncino’s *Non val aqua*, Adrian Willaert’s *Ricercar*, two excerpts from *De*

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<sup>91</sup> Nicholson, interview, December 18, 2006.

*profundis* of “Penitential Psalm No. 6” by Orlando di Lasso, and Caccini’s *Amarilli mia bella*.<sup>92</sup>

The fourth chapter of Nicholson’s document began with a description of the family of trombone instruments during the baroque era. Nicholson cited Praetorius’ *Syntagma Musicum* as a primary source in the fourth chapter.<sup>93</sup> He then reviewed the use of the trombone by the two famous Baroque composers Bach and Handel. Nicholson’s fifth chapter was a series of program notes for the four baroque pieces played on his first recital: Heinrich Schütz’s *Attendite, popule meus*, Andreas Hammerschmidt’s *Wende dich, Herr*, Heinrich Ignaz Franz Biber’s *Sonata a 3*, and Daniel Speer’s *Sonata II*.<sup>94</sup>

Nicholson’s sixth chapter dealt with the use of the trombone in the classical period. He highlighted the decline in the use of the instrument during the eighteenth century. Nicholson concluded the chapter by focusing upon the fact that the trombone was late in becoming an established member of the concert orchestra. The sixth chapter of his thesis contained a series of program notes for the final two pieces played on his first recital: “Tuba Mirum” from Mozart’s *Requiem* and Beethoven’s *Drei equale*.<sup>95</sup>

The seventh chapter of Nicholson’s thesis dealt with the solo literature of the trombone and the trombone’s lack of popularity as a solo instrument. He used the chapter to discuss the brief periods of history (the early eighteenth century and the virtuoso period of the nineteenth century) when the trombone was commonly used as a

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<sup>92</sup> Nicholson, “A Historical Background of the Trombone and its Music,” D.M.A. diss., 1967.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.



solo instrument. Nicholson concluded the chapter by mentioning the fact that compositions for the trombone, since the turn of the twentieth century, have added “immeasurably to the solo literature for the instrument.”<sup>96</sup> The final chapter was a series of program notes for the five pieces performed on his second recital: J. Ed. Barat’s *Andante et Allegro*, Henri-Paul Busser’s *Cantabile et Scherzando*, Dr. Gerald Kemner’s *Suite, Trombone and Piano* Paul Hindemith’s *Sonata for Trombone and Piano*, and Francis Poulenc’s *Sonata for Horn, Trumpet and Trombone*.<sup>97</sup>

Arguably the most important contribution of Nicholson’s research came from his contact with Robert Sheldon, a Museum Technician in the Division of Cultural History at the Smithsonian Institute. Based upon Sheldon’s information, Nicholson concluded that the early trombone, or sackbut, had thicker tubing walls than the modern trombone so that the instruments could last hundreds of years.<sup>98</sup> Nicholson’s letter from Sheldon was cited in G. B. Lane’s book, *The Trombone in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. Lane acknowledged Nicholson in the book and thanked him for the information.<sup>99</sup>

Nicholson’s thesis, “A Historical Background of the Trombone and its Music,” lead the way for future researchers in trombone history. Many researchers used his dissertation in their bibliographies including: Robert Wigness, William Collins, Donald Hummel, Charles Isaacson, James Kidwell, Jeffrey Lemke, John Leisenring, LeRoy

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Lane, *The Trombone*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982.

Baxter, Karl Hinterbichler, Allan Kaplan, and others.<sup>100</sup> Nicholson's dissertation was a popular source for trombone students investigating the history and literature of the trombone during the 1970s and 1980s.

Nicholson rarely quoted other authors or cited his sources in the body of the document. The document, however, did give a more detailed history of the trombone than was presented in the music dictionaries of the time. The bibliographic material cited in Nicholson's survey of resources was exhaustive for the late 1950s and early 1960s, although later studies presented additional information. Although Nicholson's research was concise, his dissertation contained essential information about early music performance practice and important information about literature for the trombone.

#### Articles and Presentations About the Trombone

Nicholson was considered to be an excellent writer by his peers. He published several articles in music journals, four of which were written about the trombone. These four articles spanned more than twenty years and were an outgrowth of his research about trombone history and literature. Two of the articles were published in the *International Trombone Association Journal* (ITAJ), another was published in the *Music Journal*, and yet another was published in the *Missouri Journal of Research in Music Education*. These articles helped introduce Nicholson's work to a larger readership, and in so doing, helped disseminate information about the history of the trombone.

In the fall of 1967, Nicholson had an article entitled, "The Trombone: Its

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<sup>100</sup> See Bibliography: Dissertations.

Evolution and History,” published in the *Music Journal*.<sup>101</sup> Shortly after completing his doctoral degree at UMKC, Nicholson submitted the article to the journal. The article was four pages in length and tied quite closely to his dissertation. In fact, Nicholson quoted from his dissertation throughout the article and a comparison of the article to the dissertation renders only a few paragraphs variation between the two. The primary difference between the article and the dissertation was that the article connected the different periods of trombone history together, while the dissertation was by nature more separated into sections.

Also published in the fall of 1967 was Nicholson’s article for the *Missouri Journal of Research in Music Education*, entitled, “The Development and Use of the Renaissance Trombone.”<sup>102</sup> In many ways, this article was an outgrowth of the knowledge that Nicholson had acquired while at UMKC. Nicholson did not include much of the information from his dissertation in the article because his study did not present detailed information about the trombone in the Renaissance period. The bibliographic materials from both documents, however, were similar.

As the title suggests, “The Development and Use of the Renaissance Trombone” dealt solely with the use of the trombone in the Renaissance era. The article contained extensive information about the trombone and was eleven pages in length. Nicholson relied upon most of the same resources for the article as for the dissertation. The article,

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<sup>101</sup> Nicholson, “The Trombone: Its Evolution and History,” *Music Journal* 25, no. 8 (October 1967): 70-74, 79.

<sup>102</sup> Nicholson, “The Development and Use of the Renaissance Trombone,” *Missourri Journal of Research in Music Education* 2, no. 1 (Autumn 1967): 58-68.

however, contained a number of helpful footnotes that clearly gave credit to the original authors. The article was quite detailed in its description of the use of the trombone in the Renaissance period, and clearly brought together a number of sources on the topic.

Nicholson was an active member of the International Trombone Association (ITA) throughout his career. He founded a local ITA chapter at Evangel, gave presentations at the Midwest Trombone Workshop, and wrote articles for the ITAJ. Although he was active in the Midwest Trombone Workshops and his local chapter of ITA, Nicholson only attended the International Trombone Festival (ITF) one time, when it was held at Western Michigan University in 1990. He attended the 1990 ITF because his former student, Steve Wolfenbarger, was the site host, and Figure 22 is a picture of Nicholson, Wolfenbarger, and John Kitzman at the 1990 ITF. Nicholson's lasting imprint



Figure 22. 1990 ITF at Western Michigan University. Pictured from right to left: Nicholson, Steve Wolfenbarger and John Kitzman.

on the ITA was through his two articles written for the ITAJ and his presentations at the Midwest Trombone Workshop.

“Performance Considerations of Early Music for the Trombone with Other Instruments” (1976) was Nicholson’s first article published in the fledgling ITAJ.<sup>103</sup> Because the ITAJ was a very young publication at the time, the editor was quite eager for articles about trombone history. Thus, Nicholson decided that the first chapter of his dissertation would make an excellent article, and submitted it to the ITAJ.<sup>104</sup> Although the article was an exact replication of the first chapter of his dissertation, the material was most likely unfamiliar to the majority of ITAJ readers.

In the summer of 1988, Nicholson authored another article for the ITAJ entitled, “The History of the Trombone as a Solo Instrument.”<sup>105</sup> This three-page article was a summary of the soloistic use of the trombone and a collection of Nicholson’s thoughts about the use of the trombone as a solo instrument. The beginning of the article contained a number of references to Gregory’s book, *The Trombone: The Instrument and Its Music*.<sup>106</sup> Nicholson defended the use of the trombone as a solo instrument, and he focused upon the nineteenth-century, a time when the trombone gained importance

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<sup>103</sup> Nicholson, “Performance Considerations of Early Music for the Trombone with Other Instruments.” *International Trombone Association Journal* 4, no. 1 (Winter/January 1976): 20-21.

<sup>104</sup> Nicholson, interview, February 20, 2007.

<sup>105</sup> Nicholson, “The History of the Trombone as a Solo Instrument.” *International Trombone Association Journal* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1988): 34-36.

<sup>106</sup> Gregory, *The Trombone*, London: Faber and Faber, 1973.

because of its acceptance into the symphony orchestra.<sup>107</sup> Nicholson discussed five of the more important nineteenth-century solos for trombone: Ferdinand David's *Concertino, Op. 4*; the second movement of Berlioz's *Grand Symphonie Funebre et Triomphal* entitled, "Recitative and Prayer"; Rimsky-Korsakov's *Concerto for Trombone and Band*; Vidal's *Solo de Concert, No. 2*; and Rousseau's *Piece Concertante*. The remainder of the article only briefly mentioned the twentieth-century because Nicholson pointed out a number of articles already written on the subject in the ITAJ.

Nicholson actively participated in the Midwest Trombone Workshop (MTW). Now defunct, the MTW was held annually from the 1960s through the 1980s. The location of the MTW changed from year to year, and the faculty of the MTW were the best trombone teachers and performers from the Midwest. Nicholson was on the faculty of the MTW a number of times. At the 1987 MTW, hosted by Bill Hartman at Southwest Missouri State University (now Missouri State University), Nicholson presented a lecture about trombone solo and study literature.<sup>108</sup> Another lecture entitled, "Teaching the Young Trombone Student," was presented at the 1988 MTW, hosted by Jeffrey Lemke at the University of Missouri at Columbia.<sup>109</sup> Nicholson was able to help disseminate information about the history and literature of the trombone to a large number of trombonists through his participation and presentations at the MTW.

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<sup>107</sup> Although Nicholson errantly credited Beethoven as the first composer to use trombones in his 5th Symphony, it is true that Beethoven was the most important composer to introduce the trombone

<sup>108</sup> Nicholson, *Solo and Study Literature*, Lecture Outline, January 1987.

<sup>109</sup> Nicholson, *Teaching the Young Trombone Student*, Lecture Outline, February 1988.

Nicholson was a strong advocate of trombone research, and through his publications and presentations, he was able to reach a substantially large audience. His dissertation and four trombone-related journal articles were written to educate and encourage further study of the trombone. Along with his presentations at the MTW, Nicholson's writings were valuable tools for trombone educators and students.

## CHAPTER V

### THE HISTORY OF THE TROMBONE: NICHOLSON'S IMPACT

Joseph Milford Nicholson II was born on August 15, 1935, in Penoke, Kansas. His first musical experiences were associated with his family and his local church. He grew up in the small town of Fruita, CO, and learned to play the trombone in the public school band program. Nicholson's first private trombone teacher was his high school band director and Nicholson recalled learning the fundamentals of music from him.

Nicholson left Fruita in the summer of 1952 to attend Southwestern Bible Institute (later renamed Southwestern Assemblies of God University) in Waxahachie, TX. During the 1952-1953 school year, he was offered the opportunity to play with the Select Orchestra under the direction of C.N. Rice, his private teacher for the school year. After graduating from high school in the spring of 1953, Nicholson went on to complete his general education courses at Southwestern in 1955. During his two years of college at Southwestern, Nicholson studied trombone with a euphonium player named Jesse Peterson. His choice of the music profession was a natural decision and he built his lifetime study and career upon music. On August 19, 1955, Nicholson married Jo Ellen Cramer, a fellow Southwestern student. After their marriage, the Nicholsons moved to Fort Worth, TX, where Nicholson began his studies at Texas Wesleyan College.

Nicholson studied music education while at Texas Wesleyan. During his first year of marriage, Nicholson took a job at the Arlington, TX, Buick-Oldsmobile-Pontiac



General Motors car manufacturing plant in order to provide money so that his wife could earn her degree in nursing. He had two trombone teachers while at Texas Wesleyan, the first was a freelance trombonist named Tom Skinner and the second was a motivated and eager trumpet player named Wesley Tower. Tower helped Nicholson choose his senior recital repertoire. During his senior year at Texas Wesleyan (1956-1957), Nicholson had the opportunity to teach part-time at Southwestern as the band director and brass instrument teacher. The reason Nicholson was hired at Southwestern was because Peterson left Southwestern to teach at Evangel in 1956.

After graduating from Texas Wesleyan, Nicholson became a full-time faculty member at Southwestern in 1957. In 1958, he was appointed the chair of the music department at Southwestern. During Nicholson's years of full-time teaching at Southwestern, he and his wife lived in a small apartment on campus and his wife was a nurse for the Waxahachie hospital. Nicholson's first daughter, Jorita Mildred was born in January of 1958. Also in 1958, Nicholson began his Master of Music in Education at North Texas State College (later renamed the University of North Texas), where he had the opportunity to study with a number of excellent teachers including Leon Brown (Professor of Trombone), Maurice McAdow (Director of Bands), Robert W. Ottman (theory), and Leon Breeden (Director of Jazz Studies). Nicholson believed that his teaching at Southwestern greatly enhanced his study at North Texas.

Nicholson joined the faculty of Evangel College in the fall of 1960 and Peterson, Evangel's department chair at the time, hired him. Nicholson was hired initially as a brass specialist and the assistant band director. He taught all the brass instruments at

Evangel for the first few years and was confident in his ability to teach all of the instruments. In the fall of 1966, Nicholson was appointed Chair of the Music Department, a position he held for 15 years. He was a gifted writer and researcher, and he used his abilities to greatly aid the schools accreditation process.

In 1966, Nicholson was offered the principal trombone position in the Springfield (MO) Symphony, a position he held for eleven years. As the principal trombonist in the Springfield Symphony, he had the opportunity to perform with a number of quality trombonists including a number of his students from Evangel College. Nicholson was also a founding member of the Springfield Brass Quintet in 1966. The idea for starting a brass quintet came from his studies with Irving Miller at UMKC, because Miller was a member of the Kansas City Brass Quintet.

During his years at Evangel College, Nicholson taught a large number of private students. He regularly accompanied his students on trips to the Midwest Trombone Workshop and he often entertained students in his home during the holiday season. Nicholson encouraged his students through his faith in Jesus Christ. He also demanded a high level of achievement in performance from each of his private students, and he consistently stressed the fundamentals of music in his lessons. Nicholson emphasized research and writing in his private studio by requiring each of his low brass music majors to write a five-page paper about the history of their instrument.

In 1981, Nicholson relinquished the chairmanship of the Music Department at Evangel College, and John Shows was appointed to the position. Nicholson retired from the Springfield Symphony in 1977, and consequently was no longer a member of the

Springfield Brass Quintet. Because he wanted to continue playing in a brass quintet, Nicholson became a founding member of the Evangel College Faculty Brass Quintet in 1981. The main leader of the group was Nicholson, but Plate, Shows, and Miles gave input on the musical choices for the ensemble. In 1991, Nicholson left teaching at Evangel College to become Vice President for Academic Affairs at Berean University, a position he held for eight years. Nicholson retired from teaching and administration in 1999.

During the 1963-1964 school year, Nicholson began work on his Doctor of Musical Arts (D.M.A.) at the Music Conservatory of the University of Missouri at Kansas City (UMKC). Nicholson's Doctoral Committee consisted of Merton Shatzkin, John Swanay, Archie Jones and Irving Miller. Miller was the trombone professor at UMKC, principal trombone in the Kansas City Philharmonic Orchestra, a member of the Kansas City Brass Quintet, and he challenged Nicholson to be an outstanding performer. Shatzkin, Nicholson's committee chair at UMKC was professor of music history, theory, and violin at UMKC. Swanay was a professor of music history at UMKC and inspired Nicholson to learn about early music performance. When Nicholson completed his D.M.A. in 1967, he became the first trombone performance graduate from UMKC and the first music faculty member at an Assemblies of God college to have earned a doctoral degree in music.

Nicholson's dissertation, "A Historical Background of the Trombone and Its Music," contained a summary of his research on the topic of the development and use of the trombone. Arguably the most important contribution of his research came from his

contact with Robert Sheldon from the Smithsonian Institute. Nicholson's thesis led the way for future researchers in trombone history. He was an active writer and presenter on the subject of trombone history and literature, as such he was able to reach a large audience.

#### Implications of Nicholson's Doctoral Dissertation Document

Nicholson likely never fully realized the impact that the culmination of his doctoral work would have on the future of trombone history. Although information about the history and literature has appeared sporadically throughout the some 500 years of the trombone's existence, an inclusive overview did not exist in a single document until Nicholson's work was completed. While other more extensive and in depth studies of specific aspects of the trombone prior to his study may exist, Nicholson was among the very first to undertake such a task. Why Nicholson undertook this study other than his interest has not been determined. His dissertation advisor was not a trombonist, nor was he able to recall the specific process of developing Nicholson's document. Most likely Nicholson, known throughout his career as being motivated and thorough, pursued the topic because he was intensely interested, and because he was thorough in beginning a specific task and continuing through its conclusion. Thus, he created a document that would impact many trombonists and students of the trombone for many years to come. Furthermore, Nicholson's dissertation is a time capsule for the state of trombone research in the United States during the 1960s.

Documenting the influence of Nicholson's work upon trombone historians is impossible. What can be observed, however, is the fact that during the first half of the

twentieth century, works that detailed the history of the trombone appeared sporadically. After Nicholson's document was completed, even though it was not widely distributed and never published in the form of a text, many works began to appear in publication that brought forth more detailed, comprehensive, and complete information. A reader who has perused the many historical texts and dissertations on the topic of trombone history and literature might, upon first encounter, consider Nicholson's document to be somewhat brief. When approved, however, as a dissertation document, Nicholson's work was the most complete and comprehensive available at the time. Also an assertion might be that Nicholson's work was based upon the research completed by other scholars. Although this conclusion may in fact have some merit, Nicholson was the first to pull together all of the segments of available information and mold it into a meaningful and accurate overview of trombone history and literature.

Finally, Nicholson's work was disseminated through a network of teachers and students through mostly personal contact, although also through presentations at regional and national conferences. For this work to have been so widely distributed at the time basically by word of mouth is in itself remarkable. Nicholson's interest in the history of the trombone and its literature was a signal that the teaching of the trombone as a profession was becoming mainstream in higher education, and his work was really an incubator that spurred a movement of sorts that began to legitimize the heritage of the instrument. Nicholson's work cannot be minimized. He was a pioneer in this trend that has continued into the twenty-first century.

Although Nicholson's project is detailed in this study, others who became influential in the publication of information about the trombone merit further investigation. Likewise, in that a comprehensive history study is really never complete, further study of the history of the trombone and its literature always is appropriate. Gaps still exist in many eras of music history when the trombone was prominent. Simply ignoring those lapses is not appropriate for an instrument that has such a long and rich heritage. As the age of information has moved into a digital era and travel has become so accessible and affordable, efforts focused upon the reconstruction of a comprehensive and complete history of the trombone with the same fervor and vigor, as was demonstrated in Nicholson's timely and profound work, are essential.

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